

The Accessible City

Wilfred Owen

Concern for the quality of urban life has led to growing disenchantment with the automobile as a major cause of congestion and a primary contributor to pollution. The author contends that transportation, instead of being used to accommodate congestion, can be applied in ways that will reduce congestion by making the redevelopment of old cities feasible and by directing new growth into communities designed to be pleasant and efficient.

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Leonard Goodwin

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Revolutionary Morality?

THE THEORY OF MORAL INCENTIVES IN CUBA by Robert M. Bernardo. *Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1971, 159 pages, \$7.50*

MAN AND SOCIALISM IN CUBA: THE GREAT DEBATE edited by Bertram Silverman. *New York: Atheneum, 1971, 382 pages, \$12.50*

Reviewed by Carmelo Mesa-Lago

Bertram Silverman has compiled in *Man and Socialism in Cuba* the most relevant documents of the Cuban debate including essays by Bettelheim (France), Mandel (Belgium), the late Che Guevara and seven Cuban officials (among them the former president of the National Bank and the former ministers of the Treasury and Foreign Trade) as well as a speech by Fidel Castro. Although most of these materials were published in Cuba from 1963 to 1965, only a few were available in English. The rest were scattered in several Cuban journals. Thus Silverman has provided a valuable service to the academic community.

The 17 documents have been arranged in five sections which deal with: Marxist-Leninist theory on the period of transition between capitalism and communism; budgetary versus self-financed enterprise; the functioning of the law of value; banking and credit; and the development of consciousness. Unfortunately, most titles selected by Silverman for these sections are not well defined, not all the papers are properly classified, and they are reproduced in toto with frequent duplications and large obscure or irrelevant parts. The quality of the papers fluctuates from the highly sophisticated and abstract construction of Mandel to the somewhat simplistic and pragmatic view of a small-enterprise

manager. Even the quality of the pieces of one single contributor (that is, Guevara) varies substantially. Silverman has not edited the papers nor has he helped the uninitiated reader with the Marxist terminology and the abstruse nature of many passages. He provides a brief but accurate and objective introduction to the collection, more descriptive than analytical—useful to place the debate within its historical content but without opening new ground in the field.

Bernardo's book contains the first systematic, sophisticated and comprehensive theoretical discussion of the Guevarist type and its functioning. And yet—as we are going to see—an excessive concern with theory has led him to often mix the ideal with reality, rhetorical statements with actual implementation. The book begins with a summary of the historical antecedents of the debate and a summary of the alternative types. In the central chapters, Bernardo is at his best describing in full detail the operation of the Guevarist type, both in the administration of state enterprises (the organization of agrarian and industrial enterprises, budgetary and self-financed systems) and in the organization of labor (what moral incentives are, which is the role of wages, what socialist emulation is, how labor is allocated through both central control

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and voluntary means).

The author tries, with less success, to evaluate the performance of moral incentives in terms of GNP growth and economic efficiency on the one hand and income distribution and the development of consciousness on the other. A serious obstacle that he faces in this task is the lack of systematic and accurate data. After a painful revision of the scarce information available to him—qualitative rather than quantitative—he tentatively concludes that GNP increased in the period 1950-1959, declined in 1960-1970 and was probably below the 1959 level by 1970. On the other hand, Bernardo indicates as positive aspects the reduction in income inequality and the heavy investment in education. Overall performance is, therefore, difficult to evaluate depending on the criteria and values stressed: bad in terms of growth and efficiency, good in terms of egalitarianism. The book closes with a review of the events of the late 1960s, a forecast of the future of moral incentives in Cuba and a highly theo-

retical appendix contrasting the functioning of moral incentives with that of the market.

Although the bulk of Bernardo's work is of sound scholarly value and he has made an important contribution to the field, three controversial hypotheses stated in the preface of his book and ratified in the conclusions are, in my opinion, not adequately proved. Bernardo's seminal hypothesis is that Castro and the most important Cuban leaders had, even prior to the revolutionary take-over, a Marxist anti-market ideology which decisively determined their choice of types. This hypothesis is in conflict with the previous work of several specialists on Cuba who stress non-ideological or objective factors as crucial in shaping the development of the revolutionary process. For the Marxist economists Baran, Boorstein and O'Connor, the determinant factors were objective; for the last two the monopolistic structure of part of the Cuban economy and its dependency upon the United States determined its permanent stagnation

and the need for a socialist revolution; for Baran the United States hostility provoked the radicalization of the Revolution. Two liberal political scientists, Draper and Suárez, sustain that Castro did not have a preconceived ideology, that he was a man of action who pragmatically or opportunistically adopted Marxism because it suited his desire for power and radical change.

Bernardo bases his hypothesis on a couple of paragraphs from Castro's seven-day interview with Lee Lockwood in 1965. In this interview the Cuban premier said that his transformation into a Marxist-Leninist was the result of a long process. When he was studying political economy at the University of Havana "idealistically and without any scientific basis," Castro began to transform himself into a "kind of utopian socialist," this even before he read the *Communist Manifesto* and a few works from Marx, Lenin and Engels. According to Bernardo, "Castro's early 'utopian socialism' as he [Castro] described it was an anti-market (classical) Marxism." I have carefully studied the two published versions of the entire interview without finding this description which Bernardo attributes to Castro.

Also in his interview with Lockwood, Castro stated that in 1952, when Batista's coup d'état took place, he did not consider himself a Marxist or a communist; that his famous speech in 1953, "History Will Absolve Me," the seed of his Revolution, could not qualify as true Marxist; and that during the 1956-1958 guerrilla campaign in the mountains he did not see himself as a Marxist-Leninist or as a "classic communist." It was the 1959-1961 hostility of the United States government—according to Castro—that completed his political education, accelerated the radicalization of the Revolution and turned him into a Marxist (his public acknowledgment of this belief was not made until December 1, 1961). Finally Castro stated in the interview that none of his companions in the struggle of the 1950s (including Guevara but excluding his brother Raúl) were then communists—they were but leftists.

In the introduction of his book, Silverman supports the thesis that the Cuban leadership was non-Marxist and

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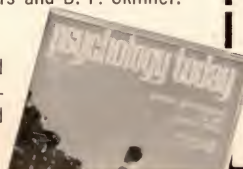
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Each month the editors of *Society* present a sampling of the many new books received for review. They are selected on the basis of significant coverage of social science problems and concerns as well as writing style and presentation that appeal to a broad reading public.

Ole R. Holsti, *Crisis Escalation War*, Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, \$11.00.

I. M. Destler, *Presidents, Bureaucrats and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organizational Reform*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, \$10.00.

Vine Deloria, Jr., ed., *Of Utmost Good Faith: The Case of the American Indian Against the Federal Government of the United States*, San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, \$10.00.

Sylvia Anthony, *The Discovery of Death in Childhood and After*, New York: Basic Books, \$6.95.

Benjamin Ward, *What's Wrong with Economics?*, New York: Basic Books, \$6.95.

Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$6.95.

Colin Greer, *The Great School Legend: A Revisionist Interpretation of American Public Education*, New York: Basic Books, \$6.95.

R. Lynn, *Personality and National Character*, Elmsford, New York: Pergamon, \$10.50.

non-communist but nationalist and leftist. Bernardo himself suggests that Castro's ideological convictions did not mature "to the point of a compelling force" until 1966. According to Matthews' biography of Castro, as late as 1969 the Cuban premier was still searching for a path for his Revolution. Matthews also reported that several top Cuban officials told him that if the Guevarist type would not work Castro would drop it.

Irving Louis Horowitz in his introduction to Bernardo's book argues that the reasons for adopting the Guevarist type rather than the ideological type were political (the need for mass mobilization and to stop trade-union pressures), external (United States hostility) and economic (Cuba's one-crop economy, lack of vital resources, scarcity of consumer goods and need to drastically increase investment). In his controversy with Sweezy in 1969, Bettelheim claimed that the manifested ideology of the Cuban leaders and their ardent support of moral incentives could have been a facade to cover up the autocratic nature of the regime. Dominguez has recently argued that ideology could have been an excuse in the clashes between power groups in Cuba. After two years of research analyzing these and other factors, I have been unable to reach a definite conclusion on the real cause behind Cuba's adoption of the Guevarist type. Bernardo either ignores, dismisses or plays down the non-ideological factors, insisting that the leaders' commitment to "their classical Marxist ideology" determined their choice of economic types.

Another of Bernardo's hypotheses is that in the Guevarist type, moral incentives and mathematical techniques are substitutes for both the market and centralized planning, working as non-market decentralizers. The accepted view that Guevara and his followers were strongly in favor of centralized planning is rejected by Bernardo as a caricature based on scattered quotations. Conversely he insists that the Guevarists were "decentralists at heart." I have gone over all the papers written by Guevara and his followers on this subject without finding one single statement in favor

of decentralization. In fact, Bernardo accumulates evidence in his book that contradicts his own hypothesis. He recalls the Guevarist statement that because Cuba is a small country with a good communication system it would be possible to implement comprehensive, centralized planning through mathematical techniques. It is true that he refers to the theoretical possibility of using input-output tables and lineal programming as decentralizing tools, but discards its current feasibility in Cuba. When Leontief, the inventor of input-output, visited Cuba in 1969, he found that the Central Planning Board had computed an *ex post facto* and incomplete (only one-fourth of the Cuban economy, the sugar sector, excluded) input-output table at the macro rather than micro level. To the best of my knowledge, no information on the actual use of lineal programming in Cuba has ever been published.

"At first," says Bernardo, "the Guevarists tied themselves to the hypothesis that the primacy of moral incentives was compatible with only one kind of centralized management of the firm through its incorporation into the state budget. Later [1964-1965] they accepted a limited form of self-financing." Albán Lataste, a Chilean planner who during 1960-1966 worked for the Cuban government, has affirmed that even this limited form of self-financing was never fully implemented in Cuba because it was corrupted with elements of budgetary financing. Furthermore, during 1966-1970 the remnants of this limited form of self-financing were replaced by full-fledged budgetary financing.

According to Bernardo the Guevarists conceived the state enterprise as a government office: "The main goal of the Cuban firm is maximum physical output as laid down by planning bodies. . . and the main inputs are centrally allocated." Bernardo states that "insofar as moral stimulation works it blunts the authoritarian bias of the administrative [central] allocation of labor." Silverman presents the problem more pessimistically: "Were moral incentives to fail, the ominous necessity of using coercion to produce

the economic surplus would have to be faced." The question is: have moral incentives worked or failed? For Silverman they have not been used efficiently and in practice have relied on directives from above thus becoming another form of repression. For Bernardo many workers truly volunteer for unpaid labor but many of the so-called volunteers are administratively assigned to jobs and the two systems are difficult to separate. In fact he provides substantial evidence that a large part of labor allocation is centrally done, especially since 1966. When discussing socialist emulation, Bernardo explains that ideally this system was meant to be as decentralized as possible but until 1966 government officials blemished it by bureaucracy and administrative coercion. The most significant proof that he gives to support his claim that since 1966 the emulation system became spontaneous and decentralized is a rather vague quote from the Secretary of Organization of the Cuban Communist Party. At the end of the book Bernardo says that the 1970 events "cast doubts on the viability of the decentralist aspect of the Cuban non-market planning system" and that "the long-term trend seems to be in the direction of greater reliance on the administrative centralist aspect."

In summary Bernardo neither proves that the Guevarists were in favor of decentralization nor that moral incentives did work in practice as decentralizers. But he makes an important contribution by presenting the issue in a theoretical framework, explaining how the system could ideally work.

The most controversial of Bernardo's hypotheses is that Cuba has become the first country in the world to achieve communism in terms of ownership of the means of production, allocation of goods and services and egalitarian distribution. In early 1968 the Cubans claimed that they were constructing socialism and communism at the same time. Bernardo goes further, stating that "Cuban socialism has become a communism of some kind" (although not fully functioning) because: practically all means of production are state owned; goods and

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services are centrally allocated and distribution is egalitarian; and the market has been abolished and money does not have command—their place has been taken by central administration. Cuban communism, assures Bernardo, has surpassed the degree achieved both by the USSR under War Communism and China under the Cultural Revolution.

In China, Cuba and the USSR, state ownership of the non-agricultural sector is almost total, but there are significant differences with regard to agriculture. In the Soviet Union there are no private farms as such, and cultivated land is organized half as state farms (sovkhoz) and half as collective farms (kolkhoz), the latter being a higher form of ownership than the private farm. There are also no private farms in China and most cultivated land is organized as communes, a socialist form of ownership higher than the state farm and, of course, than the collective farm. In Cuba some 30 percent of cultivated land is privately owned, the rest being organized as state farms. There are no collective farms, and only one commune is publicly acknowledged to exist. Why then is Cuba more advanced than China and the USSR in the matter of ownership of the means of production? Bernardo's answer to this question is that the determinant of the real character of the ownership system is not merely the juridical form but the control of the allocation function. Thus the so-called private farms in Cuba are supposedly integrated into the central plan, the state should control the supply of inputs (capital, seed, tools), and most of the farm output has to be sold to the state at officially fixed prices.

In theory I tend to agree with Bernardo's explanation. However, it seems to me that he is neglecting a crucial aspect of the problem: legally the state has the power to control production, allocation and distribution (even in the "private" agricultural sector) but does this power work in practice?

Bernardo has adopted the Sino-Cuban yardstick for measuring the advancement of socialism in one country—state legal control of production

and allocation, and egalitarianism. On the other hand, the Soviets are increasingly emphasizing economic efficiency and the achievement of the society of abundance as necessary premises for achieving other goals (egalitarianism and the New Man). The Yugoslavs, in turn, accentuate the withering away of the state through associations of producers and self-management, alleging that excessive state controls induce state capitalism (as in the USSR) and a new class of bureaucrats that obstructs the further evolution of socialism. If the Soviet and Yugoslav yardsticks are applied to Cuba, obviously she would be ranked very low in socialist development. Bernardo acknowledges the fact that Cuba is far from reaching abundance and participatory democracy but subordinates this to his own selected yardstick.

No longer do the Cubans claim to be constructing communism at the same time as socialism. At the end of 1971, the party newspaper reported on its front page that in a meeting held in Moscow between Secretary General Brezhnev and visiting Cuban President Dorticos the latter spoke of the efforts aimed at "creating the foundations of socialism in Cuba" while the former reported "the progress made in the construction of communism in the USSR" (*Granma Weekly Review*, December 26, 1971). In the Soviet-invented four-step ladder to reach the Communist Millennium, the Cubans placed themselves at the bottom step accepting that their Soviet comrades were two steps above. It seems that the Cuban leadership no longer has an "awesome religious commitment" to materialize the Guevarist dream. Or perhaps even if they ever had, the commitment lacked as Bettelheim warned a decade ago the necessary basis for reaching the dream. □

Carmelo Mesa-Lago is associate professor of economics and associate director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.